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SUBJECT: THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH MOD DG BUCHRIS:
APPRECIATE U.S. ALLIANCE, CAN'T LIVE WITH NUCLEAR IRAN,
NEED TO RESOLVE ISSUES WITH JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Cunningham, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (S) Summary. During a September 24 meeting with the Ambassador, Ministry of Defense Director General Pinchas Buchris stressed the strategic importance of Israel's relations with the U.S. He said he hoped Iran's nuclear program could be stopped without the use of force, but made clear that Israel will not live with a nuclear Iran. Buchris complained about the international community's failure to enforce UNSCR 1701 and questioned U.S. plans to sell sniper rifles to the Lebanese Armed Forces. Regarding the Joint Strike Fighter, Buchris said he had been surprised by his "tough meeting" with General Davis in Washington, and said we need to find a solution that addresses Israel's requirements. Buchris thanked the Ambassador for the X-band radar system. Buchris also said Israel had to find a way to separate Syria from Iran and Hizballah, but said this could not be done without U.S. support. The Ambassador noted his belief that a secure Israel is key to U.S. interests in the Middle East, adding that he had told Defense Minister Barak that he would always speak frankly and look for solutions to differences. The Ambassador condemned Ahmadinejad's speech to the UNGA and said we were seeking to continue our engagement with Russia on Iran. The Ambassador pointed out that we now have a good dialogue with Israel on Lebanon, and said our differences over Syria were a matter of tactics and not goals. The Ambassador praised Buchris' work on export controls, and said the issue was now behind us and should stay that way. On the Joint Strike Fighter, the Ambassador said part of the problem was that Israel was seeking a special package for a small number of planes, but he stressed his willingness to help find a solution. The Ambassador concluded by noting his guarded optimism regarding IDF-PASF security cooperation. He presented Buchris with a formal request to build a new Palestinian police barracks at Kadim, hoping for early approval. Buchris aid he has responsibility within the MOD for promoting Palestinian economic development, adding that he is trying to remove as many barriers as possible given security constraints. End Summary.

2 (S) The Ambassador, accompanied by Pol Couns, called on MOD Director General Pinchas Buchris September 24. Buchris was joined by MOD Pol-Mil Director Amos Gilad's assistant Rami Yungman and a member of Buchris' staff. Buchris began by wishing the Ambassador success in his mission, noting the U.S. role as Israel's most important strategic partner. Buchris commented that his military career included responsibility for military intelligence cooperation with the U.S., during which period he developed great appreciation for U.S. capabilities. Buchris said the crisis over Israeli technology transfer to China was now "in the past," and that he hoped we would continue to move forward. The Ambassador said he believes that a secure Israel is key to American interests in the Middle East, adding that as Ambassador he would do whatever he could to bolster Israel's security. The Ambassador observed that he had told Defense Minister Barak that while the U.S. would sometimes disagree with Israel, he

would always speak frankly and look for solutions to problems. Buchris expressed appreciation for the X-band radar system that EUCom is setting up in southern Israel, noting that this system is an important contribution to Israel's defense. The Ambassador noted the details are still under discussion and asked Buchris to let him know if problems arise.

Hope for Strong U.S. Action on Iran

¶3. (S) Turning to Iran, Buchris said Ahmadinejad's speech to the UN General Assembly had reminded him of Hitler. He noted that while many nations may feel they can live with a nuclear-armed Iran, Israel cannot. Iran may have a nuclear bomb within one or two years. If sanctions or other efforts can stop Iran's nuclear program, that would be best, he said, adding that he believes Russia does not want to see a nuclear Iran but also wants to use the "Iranian card" against the U.S. Buchris urged the U.S. to take "strong action" before Israel is forced to act on its own. He then reiterated his support for "other ways of dealing with Iran" if they can yield the desired results.

¶4. (S) The Ambassador said he had watched part of Ahmadinejad's speech and had found it reprehensible, adding that the Iranian speech contrasted sharply with those of other UNGA speakers. The U.S. is frustrated by the difficulties we have faced in getting our international partners to deal seriously with Iran, but we have not given up. We are trying to separate our engagement with Russia on Iran from other issues. Part of the problem is that we do

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not know the end point to what Russia is prepared to do with Iran. The Ambassador noted that the Chinese need to understand that a war with Iran would be a disaster for China. Preventing an Iranian bomb is a core Chinese interest but they do not seem to realize it. The Ambassador praised the close U.S.-Israeli dialogue on Iran, as well as on Lebanon.

Lebanon and Syria

¶5. (S) Buchris said it was hard for non-Israelis to understand what it is like to live next to Hamas and Hizballah. Israelis have already gotten used to the idea that Hizballah's rockets and missiles can now cover all of Israel. Hizballah now has three times as many rockets and missiles as it had before the Second Lebanon War. Buchris said he hoped Israel would not have to fight a second round, but if Israel had to it would make sure there would be no question as to who had won. Buchris complained that the international community had failed to enforce UNSCR 1701, there was no attempt to stop the smuggling of arms from Syria. He questioned the U.S. decision to increase the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, saying he hoped the U.S. and Israel could come to a better understanding on the LAF. Whom did we think the LAF would fight, and what was the point of providing them with UAVs and sniper rifles? This equipment would eventually end up in the hands of Hizballah. Buchris noted that before the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Hizballah had used sniper rifles to shoot out sensors before launching attacks on IDF outposts. Pointing to PDAS Feltman's recent discussions, the Ambassador responded that the new U.S.-Israel dialogue on Lebanon was useful and looking at how to contain Hizballah. We hope we can come to agreement with Israel on the LAF, he said, adding that no one wants to see Hizballah become stronger.

¶6. (S) Buchris said Israel was trying to make peace with both Syria and the PA, but it was tough going. It is nonetheless critical for Israel to try to find a way to separate Syria from Iran and Hizballah. Buchris expressed

his hope that the U.S. would understand Israel's approach to Syria, especially since driving a wedge between Damascus and Tehran could only work if the U.S. supports it. The Ambassador responded that our differences over Syria were a matter of tactics, not goals. The U.S. was not thrilled by Israel's initiation of indirect negotiations with Syria but we did not try to stop it. Now the French have opened the door to Syria. We will be looking for the best possible exchange with Israel in the coming months. We should figure out how best to use Syria's interest in negotiating with Israel. We will also continue to work with Egypt on managing Hamas and Gaza. We will be looking to coordinate closely with Israel in all these areas.

Problems with Joint Strike Fighter

¶17. (S) Buchris said his last visit to the U.S. had not gone well. He had visited Lockheed Martin's headquarters to discuss the Joint Strike Fighter and had received the impression that things were moving forward and that Israel was a "full partner" in the program. Then he went to Washington and had a "tough meeting" with General Davis regarding the JSF's capabilities and price. Buchris stressed that because of the threats it faces, Israel is "not like other countries." Israel is not interested in scenarios for projecting force. It has a real and concrete need to use its military capabilities to protect its citizens. Israel is doing everything it can to assist the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is critical to fight terrorist organizations everywhere, but Americans should understand that the IDF's first need and responsibility is to protect Israel. Buchris said he hoped we will develop a common understanding on the JSF. We need solutions.

¶18. (S) The Ambassador praised Buchris for his work on export controls, noting that he was satisfied the issue is behind us and we should keep it that way. Regarding the JSF, the Ambassador said part of the JSF problem is that Israel is seeking a special package for a relatively small number of aircraft. Nonetheless, the Ambassador said he would do his best to ensure that we have the right kind of discussion focused on solving problems.

West Bank Economic Development

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¶19. (C) The Ambassador observed that he is guardedly optimistic about progress on the West Bank. There have been positive developments in the Jenin area and security cooperation between the IDF and PASF is improving. Now we need to find ways to accelerate the economic development component, including by working with Tony Blair and the international donors. We share Israel's concern about a possible confrontation between Hamas and Fatah when Abu Mazen's term as PA president ends in January. We should meld together the security and capacity-building components, especially since security is the essential platform for everything else. We have noticed steps the IDF has taken to remove roadblocks. The Ambassador said he looks forward to holding a more detailed discussion with the MOD on a strategy for moving forward. It is essential to keep showing progress on the ground. The Ambassador said he had spoken to Barak about the PA police barracks at Kadim. Giving Buchris a letter to Barak formally requesting permission to build the barracks, the Ambassador said the money is available and we could begin as early as October if we get approval. If there are problems he would like to know what they are so we can solve them quickly.

¶10. (C) Accepting the letter, Buchris said he is in charge of promoting Palestinian economic development. He said he is trying to remove as many barriers to development as possible, but the main issue remains that the Palestinians must

demonstrate seriousness about security. Israelis and Palestinians live next door to each other, the solution should be two states for two peoples. Buchris assured the Ambassador that he is doing his best to support economic development and improve Palestinians' lives.

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